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Standards of accommodation for air travel

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on standards of accommodation for air travel for the period from 1 July 2000 to 30 June 2001 (A/56/426). During its consideration of the item, the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General who provided additional information.

2. The report was submitted pursuant to General Assembly decisions 44/442 of 21 December 1989 and 46/450 of 20 December 1991, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to submit annual reports on standards of accommodation for air travel. The report also contains information on expenditure by the United Nations for first class and on meetings attended by eminent persons for whom exceptions have been made for first-class air travel, as requested by the Assembly in its decision 40/455 of 18 December 1985 and section XIII of its resolution 45/248 A of 21 December 1990.

3. As indicated in the report, the General Assembly, in its resolution 42/214 of 21 December 1987, inter alia, authorized the Secretary-General to exercise his discretion in making exceptions to allow first-class travel on a case-by-case basis. In accordance with administrative instruction ST/AI/2000/20 of 22 December 2000, business-class air travel may also, in certain circumstances, be authorized by the Secretary-General.

4. During the period from 1 July 2000 to 30 June 2001, the Secretary-General authorized 67 exceptions (37 cases of first-class air travel and 30 cases of business-class travel); the total additional costs incurred as a result of those exceptions amounted to $125,091 (see A/56/426, table 1).

5. As can be seen from tables 1 and 2 of the report of the Secretary-General, the number of exceptions granted for the period from 1 July 2000 to 30 June 2001 and the related costs are lower than those approved during the period from 1 July 1999 to 30 June 2000. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 11 of the report

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that the reduction in the number of exceptions has been due to continuous administrative oversight. The Committee was further informed, during the hearings, that efforts were being made to streamline the procedures for the granting of exceptions with a view to further reducing the number of requests for exceptions and the related costs of administering the exceptions. **The Committee welcomes the streamlining of procedures as well as the reduction in the overall number of exceptions and their total costs during the period from 1 July 2000 to 30 June 2001.**

6. In connection with the list of eminent persons in annex III to the report of the Secretary-General, the Advisory Committee reiterates its comments, made in its earlier report (A/49/952, para. 17), that there is a need for clear criteria to determine the level of "eminency" of travellers and that such criteria should be applied to individuals rather than groups.

7. **With regard to exceptions on grounds of medical conditions, the Advisory Committee recommends that the granting of such exceptions should continue to be made on the merits of each case.**